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THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

Written statement* submitted by North South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 December 2000]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.01-10388 (E)

Third world debt and its implications for human rights

1. There is a contradiction between the desire to promote human rights effectively throughout the world, and particularly in the developing countries, and failure to cancel their debts whose origin, structure and computation are often beyond the control of the debtors. Since 1988, for example, amortization arrears and capitalized interest have accounted for 65 per cent of the increase in the debt of the African countries. Between 1987 and 1988, their debt increased by $65.1 billion, of which $21.4 billion represented new money. During the same period Africa reimbursed $145 billion, all of which was in the form of debt servicing. The South American countries reimbursed $722 billion between 1990 and 1998, and the countries of the south paid back a total of almost $2,000 billion during the same period.

2. Any policy for the promotion of human rights requires budgetary resources which it is impossible to mobilize owing to this debt. The criticism directed by the industrialized creditor countries at the countries of the south in respect of human rights matters is therefore outrageously hypocritical.

3. The first step that must be taken by the creditor States is to enable the States of the south to recover the assets wrongfully acquired by the former Heads of State of the developing countries and deposited in private accounts in European or United States banks. The Declaration of Dakar of the International Conference on debt cancellation (December 2000), on behalf of 200 organizations, calls for the restitution to the beneficiaries of the considerable amounts that have been misappropriated.

4. International legal cooperation - that the European Union after half a century of existence has not yet established - should put an end to the system of recycling dirty money and the misappropriation of funds.

5. Lastly, the Governments of the industrialized States should decide to cancel once and for all the entire debt of the third world which has already been reimbursed de facto in a large number of indirect ways.

6. It is only with the implementation of all these measures, which constitute a necessary condition for releasing resources with which to embark upon policies more favourable to human rights, that it will be possible to make an objective evaluation of the practice of States in the human rights field. The Commission on Human Rights should, by not dissociating the debt question from that of civil and political rights and economic and social rights, appoint a special rapporteur on the relationship between debt and human rights.